Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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Hating Castro, On $2 Million a Year

Amid roars of triumph in right-wing circles, Congress in 1995 passed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, which tightened the US trade embargo on Cuba. At first, President Clinton promised to veto the legislation — better known as the Helms-Burton law after its two chief sponsors, Sen. Jesse Helms and Rep. Dan Burton - but in early 1996, with his eye on the Florida vote in that year's presidential election, he signed it into law.

Amid the provisions of Helms-Burton was an enticing bowl of gravy: $2 million per year to be distributed to "individuals and independent organizations to support democracy-building efforts for Cuba". This grant money has started flowing and many of the recipients turn out to be Miami-based Cuban-American cold warriors linked to groups like Freedom House and the National Endowment for Democracy. And guess what? Information provided to us by Ana Radelat, a Cuba expert who closely monitors Helms-Burton, shows that most of the largest grants have gone to people who lobbied for Helms-Burton or who were big supporters of the law.

The chief purpose of the Helms-Burton bill is to allow Cubans who fled after Fidel Castro took power in 1959, and who later became US citizens, to advance claims in US courts on property nationalized by the Cuban government. They could even sue foreign nationals and companies that have indirectly benefited from the use of their former properties.

The major beneficiaries of the legislation are the people who plundered Cuba during the Batista dictatorship that preceded Castro, especially Florida-based sugar barons, cattle ranchers and distillers. Indeed, Helms-Burton is known informally as the "Bacardi Bill", because the law gave Bacardi Rum Co. its cherished opportunity to sue Pernod Ricard, a French firm that distills rum in Bacardi's old plant in Santiago de Cuba.

Furthermore, the legislation was drafted with the help of Ignacio Sanchez, a lawyer for Bacardi, and Nicolas Gutierrez, whose family had 100,000 acres of land expropriated by Castro. Gutierrez also worked as a lawyer for Bacardi and sits on the board of the Miami-headquartered National Association of Sugar Mill Owners of Cuba. Two of the bill's prime backers were Juan Prado, a retired Bacardi executive whose family lost $76 million (in 1960 dollars) when Castro took power, and Manuel Cutillas, who heads both Bacardi and the US-Cuba Business Council.

Unlike the Bacardi crowd, most people and companies with big outstanding claims in Cuba opposed the Helms-Burton law. That includes ITT and Amstar, both which had property expropriated by Castro and are now in the tourism business. Those companies recognize that Cuba has no hard currency to settle cash claims and would prefer to negotiate settlements directly with Castro, preferably in the form of a hotel/resort joint venture.

The political slush fund that is supposed to "promote democracy" in Cuba was inserted into Helms-Burton by Rep. Bob Menendez, a Democrat from New Jersey who compares Castro's regime to Nazi Germany. The Washington newsletter Cuba Info recently published a list of slush fund recipients.

One of the largest is the Institute for Democracy in Cuba, which took in $400,000 and whose leaders include Nicolas Gutierrez. Gutierrez — whose father was briefly jailed in 1959 for help-

(**"Hating Castro"**, *continued on page 6)*

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Our Little Secret

Mike Foster's Revenge

Last summer we reported on Louisiana Governor Mike Foster's threats against the Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic. Foster is mad at the clinic for coming to the aid of residents in Convent who are fighting plans by Shintech, a Japanese chemical company, to build one of the world's largest polyvinyl chloride plants in their small, largely black community along the Mississippi. Foster charges that the law clinic, headed by law professor Bob Kuehn and staffed students, is out to undermine his administration's industrial development program—consisting mainly of offering lucrative tax inducements for polluting companies to move to Louisiana. The governor vowed that if the University didn't put the clamps on Kuehn and his upstart band of students, he would search out ways to ravage the university's budget.

Foster, a millionaire who made his fortune from sugar plantations and oil wells, kept his promise. He has instructed major business executives in the state to withhold contributions to Tulane, citing the Law Clinic's trouble-making. He also went on television and threatened to revoke the university's tax status. Allies of the governor petitioned the Louisiana supreme court to investigate the clinic, a task which the court duly accepted.

Now there is a move afoot by the Louisiana state board of education regents to deny Tulane $2.48 million in state matching funds unless incoming university president, Scott Cower, pledges to neuter the law clinic. The blackmail ploy was the brainchild of a regent named Roland Toups, a Baton Rouge industrialist and Foster crony, who said he didn't much like the notion that state money was financing an outfit that put roadblocks in front of such honest businesses as Shintech. Toups's scheme enjoys the hearty support of three other regents. Over the past two years, outgoing Tulane president Eamon Kelly has admirably resisted such overt power plays. But Foster and his allies have more hope of winning Cower's ear. After all, Foster said, the man's a former business school dean.

The Guv to Tulane: Kill the Law Clinic or lose the money.

For Kuehn and his students the threat from the regents raises the pressure to a new level. "This is an astounding proposal to violate the First Amendment," Kuehn tells us. "It's a flat out retaliatory action against a university giving assistance to poor people petitioning their government for grievances."

Alabama Justice

The scandal involving GM's treatment of its black dealers and their customers continues to unfold in ever more intriguing episodes. The case of Charles Bell is instructive. Bell was recruited to the GM minority dealer program in 1979, becoming the company's first black dealer in Alabama. His Tuskegee operation was apparently so successful that white GM dealers in nearby Montgomery saw soon Bell as a threat. The white dealers made their displeasure known to GM and the company's credit arm, GMAC. In the late 1980s Bell's dealership began to suffer an inexplicable downturn in sales and he was suddenly subjected to much harsher credit terms than any of the other Montgomery area dealers. Bell ended up filing suit against GM in July of 1992, thereby setting off a legal case now rivalling in complexity the Jarndyce v. Jarndyce suit in Dicken's Bleak House.

Among other compelling pieces of evidence, Bell presented at trial a detailed statistical analysis showing that GMAC credit practices discriminated against his dealership in favor of nearby white-owned dealers. In short, the study showed that applicants for car loans at Bell's dealership were more than 25 percent less likely to be approved for financing by GMAC than applicants with similar credit profiles at white-owned dealerships in Montgomery. GM's lawyers didn't dispute the study and on June 7, 1995 a jury returned a $27 million verdict in favor of Bell. GM appealed and the Circuit Court reduced the award to $18.8 million.

Then GM appealed again, this time to the Alabama Supreme Court. In a decision notable for its chop-logic reasoning, the Alabama Supreme Court, in a divided ruling on September 24, 1996, overturned the jury verdict, ordering a new trial. Bell's more than able lawyer, Jay Smyth, filed petition with the court asking for a rehearing, a procedural move that is typically denied in a matter of weeks. But Smyth's petition, a devastating rejoinder to the court's ruling, sat in legal limbo for nineteen months—fifteen months longer than it took the court to decide the original case. Apparently, the Alabama supremes were hopelessly deadlocked on the motion.

Then on March 26 one of the justices, Terry Butts, a Democrat who had sided with Bell in the initial ruling, suddenly announced he was stepping down from the court to run for the distinctly less prominent position of state attorney general. Curiously, most political observers in Alabama give Butts scant hope of unseating the current AG, Bill Pryor. Pryor has endeared himself to the hearts of all right-minded Alabamans by indicting Barnes and Nobles as a purveyor of smut for selling two photography books, *Radiant Identities* by Jock Sturges and *Age of Innocence* by David Hamilton, featuring nude and semi-nude tots and teens. Pryor has also gone to court to argue on behalf of Etowah County judge Roy Moore's right to display above his bench the Ten Command-

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ments in his courtroom and have local pastor's preach to his juries.

Butts's mysterious departure from the court gave Alabama's governor, Fob James, the chance to appoint his replacement. James has an eccentric vision of the Constitution. For example, he doesn't believe the Bill of Rights applies to the states. The man James picked to replace Butts is a Mobile lawyer named Champ Lyons. Lyons spent much of his career as a business defense attorney. Among Justice Lyons's many talents must be a blazingly fast reading eye. In a matter of three weeks, Lyons sped through thousands of pages of court transcripts and dozens of intricate motions in the Bell case, before casting the decisive vote denying the GM dealer a rehearing before the court. That Lyons should vote against Bell is not surprising. Lyons, Fob James, and Alabama Supreme Court Justice Harold See have all let it be known that they believe jury verdicts are "out of control" and that punitive damages are often an unwarranted shackle on corporations who would otherwise love to do business in states like Alabama.

This loss may turn out to be a liberating experience for Bell and his lawyers, since it allows them to take their compelling case to the friendlier forums of the federal judiciary. We're somewhat less optimistic about the future of the Alabama judicial system. CounterPunch called Governor James's office to inquire into Champ Lyons's qualifications for such an august post. The governor's legal staffer left us with this frightful thought: "Champ Lyons believes in a strict interpretation of our laws and Constitution. He's a gifted legal scholar, every bit as profound as Howell Heflin."

"WRONG WAY" RICHBURG

As CounterPunch readers have surely noted, the US press was exuberant about the Indonesian "economic miracle" until the very moment that that country's economy collapsed in ruins. One of the prime eulogists was Keith Richburg of The Washington Post. Shortly before Indonesia's slide into the abyss, he informed Post readers that under Suharto Indonesia had "undergone one of the most profound economic transformations, from a country of widespread poverty and starvation into one of Asia's fastest-growing economies".

Now Richburg is back and he's sillier than ever. Recall that Indonesia is embroiled in the greatest popular insurgency since Suharto seized power more than three decades ago, and that this same upheaval stems from the collapse of the economic "miracle" that Richburg so recently lauded.

On April 6 - not long before the protests erupted - Richburg confidently published a Post article titled "Indonesian Opposition Goes Back to Sleep." The Post reporter opened by saying that just weeks earlier, Indonesia was "in the throes of its deepest economic and political crisis in decades, [and] the country's anaemic political opposition seemed briefly to have found its voice. Indonesia, it appeared, was entering the dying days of autocracy. Then a funny thing happened on the way to the revolution. Suharto was unanimously re-

"I wanted not only to be better than the white boys, but better than everyone else as well."

appointed by parliament to a seventh five-year term. And just as suddenly as it appeared, Indonesia's 'opposition' — isolated from public view and never able to harness widespread popular discontent — seemed to shrink from sight."

Richburg acknowledged that students seemed unhappy with the regime but said that "the opposition's calls for change never seemed to catch fire". And according to the Post correspondent, there was little possibility that the student movement would grow. He cited an unnamed Asian diplomat who questioned the "commitment" of student leaders and concluded that "Suharto is now more firmly in control than at any time since the economic crisis erupted last year. And his critics are left to wait for a new and dramatic turn of events to shift the political ground."

RADICAL STUDENTS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Visit almost any campus in the US and you'll find some form of peppy student action, as Madeleine Albright and the Clinton crowd learned to their cost in Ohio a few months ago, when they ran into spirited opposition to their plans to bomb Iraq. In this issue of CounterPunch we describe how student radicals have been battling against the wipe-out of affirmative action programs inside the University of California.

Here at CounterPunch we've said a word or two in the past about how "affirmative action" was originally advanced by government as an essentially divisive strategy, turning working class whites against blacks and other minorities. But such truisms notwithstanding we have to support our allies even if we are equivocal about affirmative action as a strategy. The minority students are fighting for it and it should be supported.

Equality before the law was always essentially a tactic of the civil rights movement, because it brought us closer to our real goal, social equality. Affirmative action is the only tactic that deals with institutional racism. As Thurgood Marshall said in his dissenting opinion in the Bakke case, race-free law and society is a noble idea, but has never existed historically. To suddenly bring this noble idea forward when the victims of 300 years of racist law are gaining redress is one more somersault in the unending pitchpolls of American hypocrisy.

Our friend Joe Paff says this: "As a working-class white boy from uneducated parents I was proud of triumphing over middle-class white, privileged kids. Learning that I'd won the race unfairly against women, blacks, Asians or Latins undermined my triumph. I wanted not only to be better than the white boys but better than everyone else in society as well. George Bernard Shaw said long ago that he supported equality for women so he could tell them just what he thought."

OKAY, WHO WROTE THIS?

"We have a puppet in the White House, pulled by wires, but with dangerous weapons in its hands. Law Enforcement becomes the new state religion."

And this?

"Tendentious laws, laws without objective norms, are laws of terrorism, such as those created by Robespierre because of emergencies in the state and by Roman emperors because of the rottenness of the state. Laws that make the sentiment of the acting person the main criterion and not the act as such, are nothing but positive sanctions of lawlessness."

Clue: The authors' last names begin with the same letter. Two of our favorite writers. First correct mailed answer opened by the editors wins a free copy of Ken Silverstein's new expose on lobbying, *Washington on $10 Million a Day*. Ken, by the way, will be speaking in St. Louis at Left Bank Books at 7pm on June 4. ■

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Student Radicals Against UC

Flyers rained down on some of the best brains in the state at the April 24 inauguration of University of California Chancellor Robert Berdahl. Just as the assembled celebrities of academe and assorted national powermongers hushed in anticipation of the ceremonial moment itself, a dark haired student stood up and declared "You're locking our sisters and brothers out of school" and leaflets showered on Donna Shalala and the crowd amid chants of "Educate, Don't Segregate." The 50 to 100 strong pro-affirmative action demonstration made it onto local tv complete with the students' quotes about "one man's hypocrisy."

The fact is, Chancellor Berdahl barely made a move this spring that student activists didn't anticipate and mess up.

On April 18, Cal Day — the institution's grand fete for potential newcomers — neatly dressed seniors handed out helpful-looking materials to prospective freshmen and their parents: "Things You Should Know About Cal." Inside the handouts — more dirt on the administration's failure to stand up to the foes of affirmative action.

A day before the official announcement of the university's first post- affirmative action admissions figures, students turned the tables on the adminstration by pre-empting the Chancellor's press conference with one of their own. Their well-attended event leaked the dismal data before the university's media machine cranked into gear.

Outraged students, high schoolers and faculty grabbed headlines across the country and by week's end the terms of the debate were theirs. A flustered Berdahl, who claims to support affirmative action, had to defend his administration's rejection of roughly 2,000 black, latino and American Indian high-schoolers who had grade point averages of 4.0 and SAT scores of 1,200 and up.

Anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 went into effect at UC Berkeley this year, and the admissions department cut back black, latino and American Indian students 68 percent. If the accepted students enroll at the typical rate (roughly two-thirds usually take up the offer and this year more than usual may prefer to go elsewhere) fewer than a dozen blacks will participate in 1998's 1,800-person freshman class. American Indians will make up 0.3 percent.

"Tired of Compliance. Time for Defiance." That was the students' message. Most spectacularly, on April 2, around 500 protestors marched behind a banner bearing those words through downtown Berkeley to Berkeley High School and sat in the middle of the large intersection at Telegraph Avenue and Bancroft. Teachers had to lock the gates to stop high-school kids from joining the march. (Some climbed the fence.) Comparable demonstrations took place that week at some sixty universities nationwide.

As all this has been going on, cynics have been paying little or no attention. It was, apparently, ever thus. Thirty years and more ago, when the political ancestors of today's trouble-makers at Berkeley were launching the Free Speech Movement on that same campus, and traipsing over those same Sproul Plaza steps, Andrew Kopkind was working for Time magazine across the bay.

Fewer than a dozen blacks will participate in Cal's 1,800-person freshman class.

"If I wrote about it, I knew that people would say "What are you interested in that shit for? Bunch of creeps", Kopkind wrote in his memoir, The Thirty Years War. "The whole culture of Time was so anti-student and anti-black, anti-beatnik and whatever. There were these names one would be called, and so the response was not to get involved. And that's what produced the culture of the Time correspondent being alienated, the detachment and the cynicism."

So shifted are the sands of cynicism that it's no longer Time that stands out, as a bastion of alienation, pessimism and name-calling. But The Nation.

As Berdahl's opponents were confronting him at the Zellerbach auditorium inauguration, the micro-pundit Eric Alterman was priming his popgun. Alterman assailed the "radical/academic" left, which he claims "concerns iteslf primarily with race, gender and sexual preference" for attacking "the reformist/social democratic left" which Alterman says "is almost exclusively economic in emphasis." Together these two, he writes, complacently, "cancel each other out."

Unsuprisingly, since he rarely leaves the confines of MSNBC studios, Alterman was wrong on the facts. Take those flyers for example. The ones floating down on Shalala et al were from a group, the Students of Color Solidarity Council. Their mission: "We believe in creating a world without racism, sexism, homophobia, classism or capitalism."

The Equal Educational Opportunity Initiative, written by Boalt Hall law students this winter and supported by UC students all over California, would overturn 209 and mandate the state to "consider the economic background, race, sex, ethnicity and national origin of qualified individuals." This beyond- affirmative action agenda is the one SCSC students have advocated at their rallies and protests this spring.

Maria Poblet, the dark-haired speaker in the student squad, is Chicana for sure — that's one "identity". She's also bisexual, a leader, a young person, a poet...a fan of Rage Against the Machine....Alterman says the "cultural left" believe the "higher the level of abstraction, the more subversive it is." Poblet says her most inspiring, subversive moment so far was talking to strawberry pickers in Watsonville at the April '97 UFW rally. That's what fuelled her efforts, with about 15 other students, to found SCSC last fall.

At a weeklong campus protest — The Third World People's College of 1997 — Poblet and her colleagues invited UFW organizers and Zapatistas; Immigrants', Prisoners' and Welfare rights advocates; media trainers, historians and lecturers on Free Trade, to give free classes to the students. And to party.

But almost everything about SCSC contradicts the conventional liberal "wisdom" about splits in the "left" and "identity politics." The "cultural" politics" of this crew encompasses the culture of class as well as race. Far from preaching only to their own converted, they mentor Berkeley High Schoolers and visit prisoners in Dublin jail.

Alterman asserts the "cultural left" lacks "even the most rudimentary strategy for translating theory into praxis..." Tell that to Berdahl, who's got a lot of moral high ground to regain before school starts next fall. ■

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CAQ Editors Speak Out
The Purge At Covert Action

Vigilant students of CounterPunch's masthead will have noted that our friend Terry Allen was responsible for the newsletter's production until—ahem—certain "streamlining" moves caused us to move this operation from Terry's computer in either Washington, D.C. or Vermont, to Jeffrey St. Clair's hillside redoubt in Oregon City.

Now we hear from Terry a disgusting tale of all-round low behavior by self-proclaimed leftists. For just over eight years Terry has been the editor of Covert Action Quarterly, and has made it an increasingly effective and interesting publication.

Here's how Terry and her two workmates describe the sequence in a letter e-mailed to supporters of CAQ.

"Last week the publishers fired the entire staff on payroll at CAQ...We'd like you to know how and why.

On Sunday morning, May 10, a courier makes the rounds to three apartments in Washington, DC. He slides a plain white envelope under the front door.

At the same time, a few blocks from the White House, owners of a small corporation watch as the security company they hired changes the locks on the door of a workplace. Their employees across town are now bending down, placid with weekend sleep, to pick up the intrusive white oblong by the door. As the workers tear it open, the owners, back at the office, begin to search systematically through all the drawers and files of each of the employees. They go through the letters the workers wrote to old friends, colleagues, writers, and lovers; they search through phone logs, old medical bills, photos, e-mail, as well as through the company records. They own the business and they have the right, under the law.

We are the three people who opened the envelopes...and read that we were summarily fired without cause.

For the last eight and a half years of the magazine's 19-year life, we are the people who have brought you credible, solid news reporting and articles that have consistently added to the historical record and fueled social change. Terry Allen (editor) and Barbara Neuwirth (staff) have worked at the magazine for almost nine years, along with Sanho Tree (associate editor) who joined the staff last year. We, are the people who did the work, who produced the magazine. They have a piece of paper that grants them legal ownership; our ownership in sweat equity was earned.

Louis Wolf, based in Washington, and Ellen Ray and William Schaap, who operate out of New York, are the people who fired us. These publishers/owners consider themselves socialists, leftists, progressives, whatever. All have done some good work in the past. But all of them acted on that rainy Sunday morning like corporate thugs. They did not try to discuss problems with our collective; they did not lay us off with notice and dignity. They cowardly hired others to sneak an envelope under our doors; they seized the contents of desks and computers and sorted through personal information. 'Arrangements will be made,' their letter noted, 'for you to remove from the office under our representatives' supervision, any personal property currently there.'

One publisher wanted to expose Hitler's current hideout in Antarctica.

Why this sordid little covert action? Why the firing of three employees whose job performance was consistently excellent? Well, here are the reasons they gave in the letter: 'Your employment is terminated...effective immediately' because of 'interpersonal relations and work styles ... creating a hostile and unproductive environment for all of us.'

Only a few days before the purge, [Schaap and Ray] wrote to us praising the latest issue as "terrific".

As for interpersonal relations: they were fine among the three people who actually produced the 64-page magazine four times a year. We did it on time, on budget, and on target with annual costs under $200,000. Interpersonal relations were admittedly less good between management and workers, but no worse than at many workplaces.

As to how we were fired, there can be no explanation. The method speaks for itself. As to why, there are two basic reasons. The first and most important was our refusal to be bullied by Wolf, Ray, and Schaap into publishing wacko-conspiracy theories.

Among those championed by one or another of the publishers was a proposal to expose Hitler's current hideout in Antarctica, an undocumented piece on alleged US release of screw worms as a weapon of war, a story presenting Serbia as the blameless victim of Bosnian aggression, and a reference by Schaap and Ray to President Aliev of Azerbaijan as a model of progressive governance. Some of these we were able to stop immediately and others took endless discussions before they were dropped."

On May 19, the three publishers issued a statement in response to the staffers' letter saying they felt "fully justified in their actions, which were "due solely to interpersonal relations and conduct," though the statement does not explore this topic further. Schaap did insist to CounterPunch that the publishers had not examined any personal materials of the staffers. He also denied that any of the publishers had intended to expose Hitler's whereabouts. For her part, Terry Allen maintains that Louis Wolf met for over two hours with a man proferring maps marking the ice-bound bunker and informed her, as she recalls, "we've got to run an article on this." ■

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("**Hating Castro**", *continued from p. 1)*

ing to finance anti-Castro groups — is supposed to use the money to disseminate "pro-democracy" literature in Cuba. Meanwhile, he's also making big bucks by representing claimants who have filed for the return of property under Helms-Burton.

Freedom House, the bogus human rights group run by old-line anti-Communists like Adrian Karatnycky (see our CounterPunch stories on Freedom House from January) is the biggest single recipient of the slush fund cash, taking in $500,000 back in 1996. At that time, the group was headed by Frank Calzon, a founder of the Reagan administration's favorite anti-Castro group, the Cuban American National Foundation, until recently headed by the late Jorge Mas Canosa.

Calzon subsequently formed a group called the Center for a Free Cuba, which recently receives a Helms-Burton dispensation to the bracing tune of $400,000. Like most grants, this one is heavily padded, with about $300,000 allocated to cover administrative costs — meaning hefty salaries for the group's directors. The rest will be spent distributing materials into Cuba such as Milan Kundera's The Unbearable Lightness of Being and pocket-size copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Another beneficiary — $300,000 — of Helms-Burton is the US-Cuba Business Council, which is headed by Otto Reich, a man who lobbied hard for passage of the bill. Like Gutierrez, he's a double-dipper who also represents Helms-Burton claimants. Reich served as US ambassador to Venezuela under Reagan and also headed up the State Department's propaganda unit formed to assist in the Central America, the Office of Public Diplomacy. His democratic mission involves holding conferences on the Cuban economy and instructing Cubans how to run small businesses.

Ernesto Betancourt, the original director of Radio Marti, has received about $150,000 in Helms-Burton slush. Bentancourt, who's been predicting Castro's "final days" for much of the past five years, will be conducting interviews with Cubans who come to the US about conditions on the island.

The bogus human rights group Freedom House has taken in $500,000 in Helms-Burton Act slush.

Another noteworthy pass-through for Helms-Burton money is the AFL-CIO. We're told that Barbara Shailor, head of the international affairs department at the labor federation, tried to avoid taking any money but caved when she was pressured by the AFL-CIO's old line cold warriors.

The AFL-CIO's cash, about $170,000, was supposed to be spent in cooperation with European and Latin American unions. However, the Europeans and Latins detest Helms-Burton and have shunned all overtures from the AFL-CIO. Hence, the federation is going to blow its cash on a union conference that will be held later this year in Italy or Brazil.

Other recipients of the Helms-Burton gravy include the International Foundation for Election Systems, which works with the National Endowment for Democracy and whose chairman is the superlobbyist and Clinton crony Charles Manatt; Jose Sorzano, an ultra who served as director of Latin America at the National Security Council under Ronald Reagan and now runs a consulting group that promotes privatization; and the International Republican Institute, a GOP-affiliated foreign policy group.

That only dedicated cold warriors are receiving grants is no surprise. Applications are screened and approved by the National Security Council, the State Department and hard-liners in Congress, especially Menendez of New Jersey. As a result, anyone not deemed politically correct - that is, anyone who does not call for Death to Fidel - is automatically disqualified.

What's especially ludicrous about the whole program is that recipients have no ability to influence political affairs in Cuba. All are reviled by Castro and have absolutely no access to the island.

The money is a total waste, just like all those millions Congress has appropriated for TV Marti, the US government propaganda station in Florida that is supposed to be beamed into Cuba but which Castro has successfully blocked from being seen there. ■

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